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The Humming of The Spaceship



space

sci-fi

226 9 18

Chapter 1 by Coraline Castell

The humming of the spaceship hadn't been even for the last 3 light years we had travelled. Hadn't they noticed? I pointed it out to the captain, a stern man with a grey beard adorned with a patch of white. He simply told me to go take care of the cleaning, "cabin boy," as I was meant to be doing.

"Aren't you afraid we might collapse?" I asked the dark skinned woman in command of the left wing – her name was to me a mystery as most other's were.

"Has it ever occurred to you that perhaps we are meant to?"

It could not be. The only spacecrafts sabotaged for failure were the ones containing traitors... but whom?

Before I could ask her, the red sirens rang. "Collision 73.561% imminent." Those darn asteroids.

Chapter 2 by ArchAngel



"You might want to hang onto something kid!" she yelled over the ship, then strapped herself into the gun turret seat.

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On screen, a large rock tu... kering. She read the stats, guided the crosshair... pt. It hit and a blast of intense light bathed us. The ship shuddered as we passed through a cloud of debris. The red

sirens continued to ring. "Damage to left bulwark, Damage to Topside." Then we were through the worst of it.

I must have been looking at the screen in awe. "No sweat kid, we live to fight another day." The question I had meant to ask her had gone right out of my head.

Later, I was on a rest break using a VR helmet in the saloon, when I overheard a conversation. They must have thought I couldn't hear them.

First voice, "...I'm telling you, there is no way that box and wiring is part of the engine." Second voice, "How would you know? Soames said it was fine, and it's the first time we've been up there for repairs since launch." First voice, "I don't trust that Soames, ion modification my buns."

I took the helmet off to see the backs of 2 engineers leaving. The hum rose and fell, was I the only one concerned about that hum?

Chapter 3 by ArchAngel



I was woken by someone shaking my shoulder. There was a rattling of doors and hushed excited voices. Outside my cabin, a couple of the crew removed a sheet of grating from the floor and one of them stuck his head down the hole.

"What's happening?", I asked a lanky man dressed in chef's whites by my bunk.

"Have you seen anyone acting suspiciously? How long have you been asleep?"

I glanced at the neon clock, "I've been sleeping about... six hours. I've not seen anyone... What's happened?"

"Two of the engineers have disappeared, they've vanished without a trace. We're doing a ship wide search." Shaking his head, he strode back out into the corridor.

It was a mystery. All their gear was still on board and stowed away, but of the men themselves there was no sign. The two pods weren't missing, there was nowhere they could go.

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On my way back from running errands in the saloon, I took a detour. The dark skinned woman on the left wing told me that the kid was in the engine room.

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"Hi." I shifted uncomfortably. "Can I ask what you meant about us being meant to collapse the other day?"

"Well, I've recognised a couple of political activists on this ship. Call me paranoid, but the government can be heavy handed cleaning up at times and isn't averse to some collateral damage."

I whispered, "Is one of those activists Soames?"

She raised her eyebrows in surprise, "Yes! He's one of them. How did you know?"

"It was something I overheard."

Chapter 4 by Coraline Castell



The woman looked me up and down for a moment, before sighing.

"Listen, kid... you're too young to get involved in something like this." She went back to meddling with some metal pieces and frowning at the way they *clicked* and *clacked* in her deft hands.

"Just forget you ever overheard whatever it was you overheard. Soames isn't just an activist, you know?" She looked up at me from her sitting position on the floor. "He's-"

A short pause followed as she frowned again.

"He's what?"

"Can you keep a secret, kid?" Her tone came out low as a humming engine.

I merely nodded.

"He's dangerous." Her features eased into a sad smile as she looked through one of the spaceship's tiny windows. "The whole activist thing is just a sweet excuse to get a murderer's ass."

"Who did he kill?"

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I could only see the back of
"Too many"

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swish'g at every move

The silence that followed spoke volumes about what neither of us wished to address. Even though she couldn't see it, I bowed and left her to her affairs, heavy words ringing at my ears and a heavy heart thumping in my chest.

Chapter 5 by Fiona



I had taken to slipping earbuds in--uncomfortable, antiquated ones, made very visible by the chord connecting them to my MERLIn (Mobile electronic recreation, location, and internet) device. I hated the sensation, but my hearing was sensitive enough that muffled commands could be easily heard and obeyed, and (despite this) they seemed to make people assume that I couldn't hear them. It was a trick I had used once, unintentionally, with the VR helmet, but just because I had discovered it by accident didn't mean I couldn't use it again.

I mostly caught only snatches of conversation: disappointing at first. The ship was full of rumors about the disappearance, but nothing useful. That was, nothing useful until I happened to be restocking paper products which needed to be retrieved from the storage space between two bays of engineering.

"I told them it was fine." The unfamiliar voice was musical and commanding but seemed touched with barely restrained tension.

"Why in the heavens would you do that?" I nearly dropped my armful of toilet paper packages and hastily juggled them so I could reach up and yank the earbud out of my right ear. "What gave you the authority--" I recognized all too well the captain's indignant tone.

"Oh, don't be a hypocrite, Zosoy. You do the same thing to your cabin boy, telling him to get back to the cleaning when he's going out of his mind thinking he's the only one that notices."

I swallowed hard and considered my options. Headphones might provide me with plausible deniability, but if they came in here, or even heard a slight noise ... and I *had* to keep listening ...

I looked around for a suitable place to hide and settled on under one of the heavier shelves, with

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couldn't put all my attention on the conversation. I was too distracted by what I had just found under the shelf.

Chapter 6 by el komodos-drago



I had never seen a dead body before, let alone two that had been murdered. I think that given the circumstances a gasp was acceptable, even inevitable, but I still wondered what would have happened if I hadn't let it out. I guess I'll never know. What I do know is what happened next.

The Captain strode quickly around the corner, almost robotically scanned the shelves then dragged me from my hiding place. "What are you doing here, boy!"

My mind spun rapidly trying to solve the mystery. "The bodies, sir," I said stunned. "I asked you a question!" he almost bellowed.

At this point the other man came into view to see the captain pinning me to the shelves and, more importantly, the bodies. "He has a point," he hummed in a deep tone that sounded like the hum of the ship. I knew now that I was not the only person who had noticed but why were they keeping it a secret? Something didn't add up.

The Zosoy shot a look at the man that was more ferocious than an ion stream and could probably have melted bulkheads. The man didn't so much as flinch, just kept staring sadly at the bodies. Finally Zosoy noticed and his mood darkened.

Having looked at them for a few seconds he turned back to the man who looked at me. I tried to put on my best completely harmless and frankly quite terrified face, which was not hard. Zosoy looked at me and then back at the man who then raised an eyebrow. The meaning was clear *what should we do with him?*

The captain crossed his arms and continued to glare. *Not my problem.* The man opened a door and the two walked outside leaving me in the stationary cupboard to ponder my fate.

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I was going to die.

Slowly I would suck up every last molecule of oxygen in this room. Still carbon dioxide poisoning is not that bad of a way to go. Much better than the two engineers anyway. And, by some small consolation, an idea of what was going on began to form in my mind.

Chapter 7 by el komodos-drago



'I told them it was fine.' Where had I heard that phrase before? Oh yes, it was the two engineers. One he said, what was it 'Soames said it was fine' Coincidence perhaps but if the man I had just overheard was Soames things began to slot into place.

The Bridge was the largest spaceship in the known universe when it was finished. It was the first Hyper Ferry, a cheap way of transporting masses of people from planet A to planet B. It ran several voyages fairly successfully but then disaster, in the form of a team of Algan Separatists, struck. They hit the ion generator trapping the ship in the infinite blackness of virtual space. The crew would never get out, they would just slowly starve to death or... The thought was unthinkable.

The official version is that no one found out who was behind the attack but the version whispered in alleyways and late at night by those whom had drunk too much Rainbow Java was that the authorities knew exactly who but he had fled into The Straits of The Dire Stars. That was what the dark-skinned woman had meant.

That would explain the box. The government sabotaged ships carrying traitors. They alter the hum and make sure that they never set foot on a planet again. The ship would never emerge from virtual space, it would just keep on calmly sailing on until, like the victims of the burning bridge, they starved or...

Would that be a fair price to pay to get Soames from this world? But what about the captain? I had looked up to the captain, admired him, but he knew that Soames was on board his ship and what was he doing? Helping him! Did that make him as guilty as Soames?

And what about the bodies. Did I... See more of Story Wars... though I know he was helping Soames I could not see him. I... to see them there. And why would Soames call him... himself? Perhaps there was a government agent on board who had seen the two and killed them.

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So the government did know Soames knew what they were doing. But would the captain manage to stop them? Would that be for the best?

I couldn't think of an answer to that question.

In fact, I couldn't think at all. My brain was clouding over. There was a low hum in the background and this time it wasn't just the engine.

Not long now.

Not long

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